

## **Joint Statement of the United States--Bahamas Partnership Dialogue**

Senior officials from the Governments of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas and the United States of America met on Monday, December 17 in Nassau to engage in a broad-ranging dialogue on issues of mutual interest. Topics during the day-long series of open, collaborative, and productive discussions included: narcotics smuggling, trafficking of illegal firearms, illegal migration, trafficking in persons, maritime domain awareness, crime prevention, and community security.

Under the direction of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, the Deputy Assistant Secretary for the United States Department of State's Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, Liliana Ayalde, led the delegation of senior U.S. government officials who were charged with developing a clear understanding of the needs and priorities of the Government of The Bahamas. The Dialogue's outcomes will play a central role in continuing coordinated bilateral law enforcement, maritime and national security efforts.

In her closing statement, Deputy Assistant Secretary Ayalde emphasised that the dialogue underscored the close ties that exist between The Bahamas and the United States and a commitment to build on the two countries' strong historic foundations. She also stressed the significance of convening the high-level meeting to examine existing cooperation efforts, share information on security-related trends in the region, and discuss ways to increase the effectiveness of joint responses to transnational security threats.

The Right Honourable Perry G. Christie, M.P., Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas similarly acknowledged the close connection between The Bahamas and the United States, and welcomed the high-level delegation from the United States. The Prime Minister noted the continued development of enhanced cooperation between The Bahamas and the United States, rendered particularly critical due to the geographic vulnerability of The Bahamas within the context of transnational and domestic criminal activities. Reference was also made to the reintroduction of the Urban Renewal programme, and his confidence in its ability to positively impact the lives of the Bahamian people, particularly the most vulnerable.

Prime Minister Christie expressed his pleasure at the longstanding rapport between the Governments of The Bahamas and the United States, which has meaningfully contributed to mitigating both mutual concerns and advancing matters of parallel importance. He underscored the serious challenges faced by The Bahamas as a consequence of illicit trafficking in firearms and stressed the urgency of The Bahamas and the United States arriving at mechanisms to disrupt the illegal trade in firearms.

The partnership between The Bahamas and the United States has proven successful in securing the common maritime border from threats arising from transnational criminal groups and ensuring community safety, as well as reinforcing a common commitment to ensure orderly, legal, and safe migration in the region. The United States and The Bahamas recognise the historic binding economic ties between the two countries and will continue to seek ways to expand bilateral economic cooperation and trade development.

This Dialogue offered an opportunity to review the current bilateral partnership with a goal of identifying emerging threats to both countries, strengthening existing security mechanisms, concluding negotiations on pending agreements, formalizing new areas of potential cooperation and seeking how new avenues through the partnership dialogue can be enhanced. A follow-up meeting is anticipated to take place in the Spring of 2013 to review progress and continue to develop the initiatives explored during the past two days.